



CASE STUDY / **East Street: Barking**

CONTEXT

- Over the last decade, Barking has seen massive change through regeneration. East Street is in the vibrant town centre, and is located in one of these regeneration zones.
- Population and demographic changes play a critical role in Barking. The borough has the highest birth rate in the country and rapidly changing ethnicity alongside substantial housing growth.
- According to LB Barking & Dagenham's (LBBD) Care Leaver's Support Team, accommodation is the single biggest concern for young people as they begin to transition from the care system to independent living.
- Around one third of care leavers experience homelessness within 2 years of leaving care, which is not going to help them achieve their potential.

PROJECT

- In partnership with LBBD, we looked to provide for this growing need for good-quality, affordable care leaver's accommodation by extending work we were already engaged in bringing empty homes back into use.
- One issue for LBBD as a council is that there are many redundant commercially-owned units in shopping areas which might be suitable for conversion to residential. We looked to pilot a project to try just that!
- The property we renovated is owned by LB Barking & Dagenham (LBBD). Although the ground floor was on a short-term lease as a linen shop, the upper floors had been unoccupied for a long time and were derelict.
- We leased the upper floors and completed works in September 2019. It now houses 3 young care leavers.
- The shared home is managed on a sub-lease between us and LBBD Children's Services team, who provide the proper transitional support to the young people as they move on with their lives.

OUR ROLE

We have taken on multiple roles which demonstrate the diverse and flexible approach we can take to supporting councils to realise their local vision and aims:

- Project Manager throughout, overseeing the feasibility, planning, detailed design and construction stages.
- Design role up to planning, and contractor role in the refurbishment fit-out of the shared accommodation. We also managed on-site training for local disadvantaged young people from Barking & Dagenham College.
- Through grant funding from Land Aid and SEGRO, we raised £105,000 for the project and Big Issue Invest provided the social loan for the remaining budget at very favourable interest.

IMPACT

- The pilot project was successful and now LBBD want to partner in further renovations of empty commercial property they own to provide a further 19 bed spaces in 5 properties for young people leaving care.
- We have been able to secure further grant funding from our corporate supporters totalling over £350,000!
- All the research around "housing first" proves that a decent, stable place to call home is important in allowing vulnerable people to develop and thrive.
- The programme is fundamentally providing the stability that young people need to engage with the support provided for them, and for it to be more effective in the long-term.
- Meaningful on-site training is provided for young people with learning difficulties (e.g. autism) and Barking & Dagenham College have evidence of the increased confidence, work-readiness, and future job prospects.